

EARLY
Christian Instruction,

IN THE FORM OF A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A Mother and a Child.

WRITTEN AT THE DESIRE OF

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

IT is hoped that this little manual will prove an assistant to such parents, and others concerned in the education of children, as desire to imbue their tender minds betimes with the principles of religion. The compiler is far from thinking it a complete system, even for a child; but is aware that the knowledge and experience of the parent will often be wanted, to supply deficiencies, which, without an undue prolixity, seem unavoidable in so brief a compilation. It may be just further hinted, that if the

child be able to read the questions, which are generally short, it will be best for the parent, or other instructor, to have in hand a duplicate of the Dialogue, and read the answer in an impressive manner.

E A R L Y

Christian Instruction, &c.

Dear mother, I am sometimes uncomfortable. I want to be always comfortable and happy.

Then, my dear, thou must take the way to be happy.

What way, mother? Which is the way to be happy?

To let alone naughty and wicked things, and to be a very good child.

What things are wicked, mother?

Telling lies is very wicked. So is using bad words; being disobedient; being cruel

to dumb creatures; stealing; giving way to passion, and other things of that kind.

But what are good things?

Telling the truth; hurting nobody; minding what thy parents say to thee; being kind and loving to every body.

But, mother, how shall I be always good? I forget sometimes.

Thou must mind, my dear, that within thee, that secretly inclines thee to be good; and warns thee of the evil thou art going to do, time enough for thee to let it alone.

What is that within me?

The Spirit of God: and God is that great and good Being, who is above all; who made thee and me, and all the world, and all things in it. He sees and knows all we do, and will help us to be good; for he watches over us night and day, to do us good.

Who was the first man, he made?

Adam: and God placed him in Eden, and gave him Eve to be his wife, and they were very happy.

Was Eden a pleasant place?

There was a very beautiful and fruitful garden in it; but what made them so happy was, that they were at first innocent: that is, they did not do wicked things.

And were they always happy? Did they never do what they should not?

Yes they did: and then they were unhappy, sad, and miserable.

O dear! What did they do?

They did not mind what this great, and good, and wise God had said to them. He had told them that they must not eat the fruit of one particular tree; though he gave them leave to eat freely that of all the rest.

And did they eat of that tree, they were told not to eat of?

They did indeed. Eve was tempted, and she thought the fruit looked pleasant. So she ate some, and gave some to Adam, and he ate some too; though they both knew they ought not.

Were they then unhappy?

Yes: and they were ashamed of themselves; and they were afraid that God should see them; and they tried to hide themselves, but they could not. Nobody can hide himself from God. Mind that, my dear, and never do any thing to make thee ashamed He should see thee.

I hope I shall not, mother. But what could Adam and Eve say when they were found out?

They tried to make excuses. Adam laid it upon Eve, because she brought him the fruit; and Eve laid it upon the serpent, or devil, who had tempted her,

and bid her not mind God. That was very wicked. Was it not, my dear ?

*Yes indeed, I think so ; but mother, were not Adam and Eve punished ?
What was done to them ?*

They were turned out of that pleasant garden of Eden ; and forced to get their bread by hard labour, in places where there were briars and thorns. But this was not the worst ; for, having lost their innocence, they had bad inclinations, and so had their children after them : and thou, my dear child, findest something of it now and then. This is what I want thee to guard against.

But, mother, what became of the serpent ?

He was cursed, and it was foretold that one of Eve's descendants should at last destroy him.

What became of Adam and Eve ?

They lived a very long time, and had a great many children and grandchildren; and so the world was peopled.

Who was Adam and Eve's first child?

Cain.

Was he good and happy?

No, he grew wicked and very unhappy.

What did he do?

He gave way to envy and passion; and he was angry with his brother Abel, who was a better man than himself; and at last he killed him.

How very bad! But mother, what became of Cain?

Cain was so tormented with thinking of his wickedness, that he was afraid every body that met him would kill him.

Where may I read about all these things?

In the Bible, my dear; and I hope thou wilt always love to read in it.

But that is a great book, mother. Do tell me now some more about the first people.

When Adam had fallen from his innocence, the children which he had, and their children were, as I have told thee, inclined to evil. They gave way to temptation, till at last the world grew so wicked that God determined to destroy them in a flood of water.

But were all the people bad? Were none good and happy?

Yes, some were good men. We do not read any thing bad of Seth, who also was Adam's son. Enoch also, the great-grandson of Cainan, who was Seth's grandson, is spoken of as a very good and happy man, for it is said, "he walked with God." And, no doubt, there were other just persons who lived and died before the flood. And Noah, great-grandson of Enoch, was a just man, and he found favour with God;

and so, when the flood came, Noah and his family were saved in an ark, which was a kind of ship. So all of us now come from Adam and from Noah.

But why are we called Christians?

What is it to be a Christian?

I shall like to tell thee, my dear child; but I think I may as well tell thee a little more first about the men of ancient times.

Yes do, mother:—I shall like to hear about them.

Well then, about four hundred years after the flood, when the world was peopled again, lived Abraham; and God called him, and promised to make of his family a great nation.

And were they so?

Yes; but first, in the time of Abraham's grandson, they left their country, on account of wanting bread, and went into another country called Egypt, where at

length they were made slaves, and sadly abused. For all that, they increased greatly.

How did they get free?

God raised up a great prophet, named Moses, and gave him power to do wonderful acts; and at length the king of Egypt let them go, and Moses divided the waters of a sea, and they walked through it dry; and when the king and people of Egypt tried to follow them and take them, the water came in upon these Egyptians and they were drowned.

What was the name of the people which went through safe?

Israelites, so called from Israel (or Jacob), grandson of Abraham.

Where did the people go, when they went away from Egypt?

They went back to the country, which their forefathers had left for want of bread; and which had been promised to

Abraham; but on their journey Moses made laws for them by the command of God; and they were fed with food which they found in the morning on the ground, after the dew was dried up: this food was called manna.

Were these people good and happy, mother?

Not always, and when they were not, they were punished. It is remarkable how happy they were when they kept God's commands by Moses; and into what distress they fell, when they did not.

Had they any kings, like the people in Egypt?

Not for a long while, but afterwards they had kings, and some of them were very famous men, and did many good things: particularly David, who was also a prophet; that is, one who spoke of things to come; and they had several other prophets, and many of them foretold the

coming of Christ. And Moses also long before had prophesied of Christ.

Then I suppose Christians belong to Christ; and mother, remember thou wast to tell me why WE are called Christians, and how it is to be a Christian?

Yes, my dear, certainly, Christians are so called after the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and such as know him, love him, and obey him, are true Christians.

How may I know him?

By minding the Spirit of Christ, which, as I said before, is within thee.

What then, mother, is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ the same?

Yes, my dear: and good, and holy, and wise, and gracious or kind, and very loving to good children. So, my dear child, if thou wilt mind the Spirit of

God within thee, thou wilt know his Son Jesus Christ; and if thou obey Christ, he will lead thee to God; and thou wilt be more happy than I can tell, or thou canst think. And if thou continue thus to know God, and Christ, in the Holy Spirit, thou wilt not only be happy here, but, after death, happy for ever in heaven.

Did Jesus Christ ever come into the world?

He is always in the world, in Spirit, in the hearts of such as love him, and keep his commandments; and also in the hearts of others, reprovng them for being bad, and persuading them to be good.

Yes, but did not he come into the world once, in the form of a man?

Yes, he did; about eighteen hundred years ago.

Where may I read that?

In the New Testament, which is the best book in the world; and very delightful to read in, for good people.

What did he come for?

“ Jesus Christ came into the world, to save sinners.”

What doth he save them from?

He saves them from sin, that is, from wickedness, by making them good and holy, and innocent again; and so he saves them from the unhappy effects of sin in this world; and from the dreadful punishment of sin, from misery after death.

How does he save them?

By having offered up his own life, on the cross, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; and also by putting his good Spirit within them: and so, my dear, when we have done wrong, if we repent, that is, are sorry for it, and humbly pray to God for forgiveness, he will pardon our offences for his Son Christ's sake.

But does Christ mind little children?

Yes, my dear, to be sure he does. Once some people wanted to hinder him from

taking notice of them; but “ he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

How may I understand all these things? I should like to find them all out, that I may be good and happy, and that I may be saved.

Thou canst not find them out all at once, or even by studying about them. They are too wonderful for thee. But thou canst mind the good Spirit of Christ within thee, when he warns thee of what is wrong, and inclines thee to be good. And as thou triest always to do this, and prayest to him for help, he will help thee, and will let thee understand as much of these things as is useful to thee.

But I may now know a little of what is in the Testament, about the Lord Jesus Christ. May not I?

Yes, surely, my love, thou mayst. That good book was written on purpose to

tell us about him : that we might believe in him, love him, and obey him, and be his friends ; and then he will continue to love us, and will save us, and receive us into heaven.

I hope, when I can read well, I shall often read in it. But do, dear mother, do tell me now a little more about Christ. Thou makest me think I cannot be saved and go to heaven without him. Where was he born, mother ?

In Bethlehem, a town of Judea.

Where is Judea ?

It was a country a great way off, toward the sun-rising ; and the people were Jews.

Who were they ?

They were generally people who were descended from Abraham ; but they were called Jews from Judah, a son of that Israel I told thee of : and king David was a descendant of Judah ; and Mary, the

mother of the Lord Jesus, was a descendant of David.

And were not the Jews very glad when Christ was born among them?

Some of them, at first, were; and some thought he was to be a great king, and make them a great nation again: for they had been conquered by another people, when Christ came.

And did he, mother? Was he a king?

No, not in the way they thought of; for he took on him an humble appearance, and spoke against their hypocrisy and pride; and would have made them good, and humble, and happy.

And did not they mind what he said?

Some of them did, particularly twelve men, who were called his Apostles. A great many others also believed on him, and they were all generally called his disciples, that is, his scholars, because he taught them, and they learned of him.

What is it to believe on him ?

It had been foretold, my dear, as I have hinted, many hundred years before, that the Lord Jesus Christ would come into the world ; but because the Jews expected he would come like a great king, and he did not, but appeared so humble, they thought he was not the Christ ; that is, they did not *believe* : though he showed, by his great power, that he really was the person foretold.

How could that show it ? I cannot think.

Well, my dear, have patience and attend. I will try to tell thee. Among other things it had been foretold, and the Jews knew it too, that when Christ came, he should make blind people see, lame people walk, deaf people hear, and dumb people speak ; also that he should heal all manner of sickness. Now Christ, when he came, really did all these wonderful works,

and even made dead people live again ;
and yet the Jews in general would not
believe.

*But mother, what was that thou saidst
about the death of Jesus Christ on the
cross ? How was that ?*

The unbelieving Jews were so angry
because many people did believe, that
they told falsehoods about Jesus, and
caused the governor of their nation to
kill him.

How is it to die on a cross ?

I will tell thee soon ; but first let me tell
thee how wickedly they used him before
that. They spit in his face ; they struck
him with their hands, when he was blind-
folded, and bid him say who did it ; and
the governor had him scourged ; and when
he had been so cruelly treated, the soldiers
took him and dressed him like a mock-
ing, with a crown of thorns on his head ;
and they did mock him, and spit on him,

as the other wicked people had done before.

*But none of this was what killed him :
was it?*

Thou shalt hear, my dear. After they had made him suffer these cruel things, they led him out of the city Jerusalem, and then they nailed him through his feet and hands to a cross, as they used to do to the vilest bad men, and in that painful posture they left him to die : and he did die the same day, and was buried ; but on the third day he rose again from the dead ; as he had told his disciples he should. This was another sign that he was truly the Son of God.

Well, did not the Jews then believe ?

No : and they wanted to make people think that he was not risen and alive.

*But were not his disciples very glad to
see him alive again?*

Yes, they were, and they believed more than ever that he was the Son of God.

What did the Lord do, after he rose from the dead?

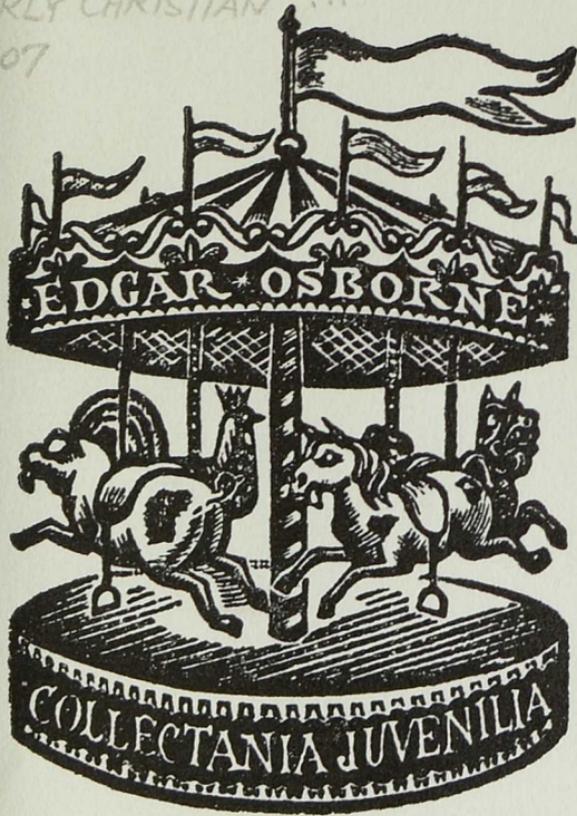
He was several times with his beloved disciples; he did several more wonderful works, which are called miracles; and he gave them directions to preach concerning him in the world, in order that others might believe, and become good and happy Christians; and he gave his disciples whom he thus sent, power to do miracles, as he had done.

How long did he stay with them?

He was with them at times for forty days; and at last he went with them to Bethany, a village near Jerusalem, and while he was blessing them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

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